

**Department of Health & Human Services  
Public Health Service  
Health and Human Services Administration  
Bemidji Area Indian Health Service  
Bemidji, Minnesota**

**Refer to: OPM**

Bemidji Area Indian Health Service Circular NO. 01-03

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Policy on Personal Use of  
Government Office Equipment

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**1. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this circular is to establish Bemidji Area Office Indian Health Service (BAOIHS) policy on the personal use of Government office equipment, including information technology, when such use involves minimal additional expense to the Government.

**2. POLICY**

BAOIHS employees are permitted limited use of Government office equipment for personal needs if the use does not interfere with official business and involves minimal additional expense to the Government. This limited personal use of Government office equipment should take place during the employee's non-work time. This privilege to use Government office equipment for non-Government purposes may be revoked or limited at any time by appropriate agency or Department of Health and Human Services Officials.

You may use Government Office equipment only for authorized purposes. Limited personal use is authorized as follows:

- A. Limited personal use is only authorized if it involves minimal additional expense to the Government.
- B. You are authorized to make limited personal use of Government office equipment during non-work time.
- C. This use must not reduce your productivity or interfere with your official duties or the official duties of others.
- D. You must be authorized to use equipment for official Government business before it is available to you for limited personal use. Furthermore, IHS is not required to supply you with equipment if it is not required for you to perform official Government business.
- E. Managers and supervisors may further restrict personal use based on the needs of the office or problems with inappropriate use in the office.

Contractors are not authorized limited personal use of Government office equipment, unless it is specifically permitted by contract or other memoranda of agreement.

### **3. DEFINITIONS**

- A. **Government office equipment** includes, but it not limited to: personal computers, related equipment and software, Internet services, email, library resources, telephones, facsimile machines, photocopiers and office supplies.
- B. **Minimal additional expense** means the expense incurred when the Government is already providing equipment, supplies or services and you use only limited additional amounts of electricity, ink, toner or paper. Wear and tear from normal use is also considered minimal additional expense.
- C. **Non-work time** means the time when you are not performing an activity for the benefit of the agency and under the control or direction of the agency. Examples of non-work time include off-duty hours such as lunch periods, authorized breaks, before or after a workday, weekends or holidays, but only if your duty station would normally be available to you at such times.
- D. **Personal use** means uses other than official Government business.
- E. **Privilege** means that you have no inherent right to personal use of Government office equipment.

### **4. PROHIBITED USE OF GOVERNMENT OFFICE EQUIPMENT**

Employees must not use Government office equipment for activities that are inappropriate and are specifically prohibited from using Government office equipment to maintain or support a personal private business.

Examples of inappropriate activities include:

- A. Using large files. Sending or receiving greeting cards, video, sound, interactive games or other large file attachment may hinder the performance of an entire network.
- B. Loading personal software onto your computer or making configuration changes.
- C. Engaging in email practices that involve ongoing message receipt and transmission referred to as "instant messaging."
- D. Making long distance telephone calls. There are three exceptions: in an emergency; brief calls within the local commuting area to locations that can only be reached during working hours (e.g., to arrange car repair, doctor); and brief calls home within the local commuting area (e.g., to arrange transportation, check on a sick child).
- E. Using Government equipment as a staging ground or platform to gain unauthorized access to other systems.
- F. Creating, copying or transmitting chain letter or other mass mailings, regardless of the subject matter.
- G. Creating, copying or transmitting any material or communication that is illegal or offensive to fellow employee or to the public, such as hate speech, material that ridicules others based on race, creed, religion, color, sex, disability, national origin or sexual orientation.
- H. Viewing, downloading, storing, transmitting or copying materials that are sexually explicit or sexually oriented, related to gambling, illegal weapons, terrorist activities or any other prohibited activities.
- I. Using Government office equipment for commercial purposes or in support of other "for profit" activities such as outside employment or business (e.g., selling real estate, preparing tax returns for a fee).
- J. Engaging in any outside fund raising activity, endorsing any product or service, participating in lobbying or prohibited partisan political activity (e.g., expressing opinions about candidates, distributing campaign literature).
- K. Acquiring, reproducing, transmitting, distributing or using any controlled information including computer software and data, protected by copyright, trademark, privacy laws, other proprietary

data or material with other intellectual property rights beyond fair use, or export-controlled software or data.

**5. IMPLIED CONSENT**

Any use of Government communications resources is made with the understanding that such use is generally not secure, is not private, and is not anonymous. Indian Health Service employees imply their consent to disclosing the contents of any file(s) or information maintained or passed-through IHS office equipment. By using IHS office equipment, consent to monitoring and recording is implied with or without cause, including (but not limited to) accessing the Internet, and using email.

**6. MONITORING TOOLS**

Indian Health Service system managers and supervisors may access any electronic communications and do employ monitoring tools to detect improper use. Electronic communications may be disclosed within the IHS to employees who have a need to know in the performance of their duties.

**7. PENALTIES FOR MISUSE OF GOVERNMENT EQUIPMENT**

Unauthorized or improper use of IHS office equipment could result in the loss of use or limitations on the use of equipment, disciplinary or adverse actions, criminal penalties, and/or employees being held financially liable for the cost of improper use.

**8. EFFECTIVE DATE**

The policy and procedures contained in this Circular are effective upon signature by the Area Director, Bemidji.

Kathleen Annette, M.D.  
Director  
Bemidji Area Indian Health Service

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Date